

SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 8, 2003
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

STB Docket NO. AB-33 (Sub-No. 202X)

**Union Pacific Railroad Company--Abandonment
Exemption--in Franklin County, IA**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a 5.90-mile line of railroad known as the Sheffield Industrial Lead, between milepost 179.80 near Chaplin and milepost 173.90 near Sheffield in Franklin County, IA. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

In its petition, UP states that AgVantage FS, Incorporated (AgVantage) is the only customer on the line. In 2001, AgVantage shipped 171 cars (17,486 tons) of corn at Sheffield and 539 cars (53,473 tons) of Corn at Chapin. In 2002, AgVantage shipped 281 cars (28,107 tons) of Corn and 25 cars (2,475 tons) of Milo at Sheffield and 297 cars (29,425 tons) of Corn at Chapin. UP states that the proposed abandonment, will not have an adverse effect on AgVantage.

The line was constructed by the Central Railroad of Iowa in 1870. The line is laid with 100-pound rail. The line contains reversionary interest property but no federally granted right-of-way. Upon abandonment the rail line might be retained for subsequent use or sold to a salvage company.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

UP submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. UP served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). Also, we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included: AgVantage FS, Incorporated;

Department of Natural Resources; Franklin County Board of Supervisors; Iowa Department of Economic Development; National Geodetic Survey; National Park Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Department of the Interior; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 3.

The Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, (Corps) states that it has been determined that the proposed abandonment does not require a Department of the Army section 404 permit, but if abandonment activities involve the extraction of any bridges, UP will be required to: (1) remove all fill material to an upland, non-wetland site; (2) remove all pilings to at least one foot below streambed elevations; (3) seed all disturbed areas with native grasses; and (4) take measures to ensure that sediments are not introduced into waters of the United States.

Traffic

Using year 2002 data as the base year,¹ the proposed abandonment could result in the conversion of about 603 railcars to truck traffic. Using a conversion factor of 4 trucks per railcar,² SEA calculated that, if all the rail traffic is diverted to truck traffic, about 2,412 loaded trucks per year or 4,824 total trucks (assuming an empty backhaul) could be added to area roadways. On a per day basis about 20 trucks per day could be added to the area roadways during a 240 workday year.³

UP states that AgVantage has already terminated its rail activity at Sheffield in favor of trucking grain to the recently enlarged UP rail served facility at Chapin. According to UP, the portion of the line at Chapin and running south would be reclassified and AgVantage plans to take control of the track as an industry spur. UP states that it will continue to provide service to AgVantage's Chapin facility and will continue to provide rail service at its main line in Chapin, which is less than one mile from the town of Chapin and five miles from Sheffield. Sheffield and Chapin are located on U.S. Highway 65 and Interstate 35 is about ten miles to the west.

¹ Because 2002 is the most recent complete year of data, the Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is using 2002 as the base year.

² The conversion factor is an estimate used to calculate the rail to truck conversion of varied commodities.

³ 240 workdays result when weekends and holidays are subtracted from a 365 day year.

HISTORIC REVIEW

UP submitted a historic report as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.8(a)]. UP served the report on Mr. Steven R. McCann, Division for Community Progress, Iowa Department of Economic Development, the Department of Natural Resources and the State Historical Society of Iowa pursuant to 49 CFR 1105.8(c). UP states that it knows of no historic sites or structures or archeological resources on the line or in the project area. We have reviewed the report and find that no historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) would be affected by the proposed abandonment.

Pursuant to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for implementing the section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act at 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1) and 36 CFR 800.8, we have determined that the proposed abandonment will not affect historic properties listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The documentation for this finding, as specified at 36 CFR 800.11(d), consists of the UP's historic report, all relevant correspondence, and this EA, which have been provided to the SHPO and made available to the public.

CONDITIONS

We recommend the following environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

Based on the comments of the Corps, we recommend that if salvage activities include bridge removal, UP shall be required to: (1) remove all fill material to an upland, non-wetland site; (2) remove all pilings to at least one foot below streambed elevations; (3) seed all disturbed areas with native grasses; and (4) take measures to ensure that sediments are not introduced into waterways of the United States.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, and if the recommended conditions are imposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and, therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In this case, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

PUBLIC USE

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does not take place, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

TRAILS USE

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Board's Office of Public Services responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 202X)** in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have

questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1657, fax at (202) 565-9000, or e-mail at Newman@stb.dot.gov.

Date made available to the public: August 8, 2003.

Comment due date: September 8, 2003.

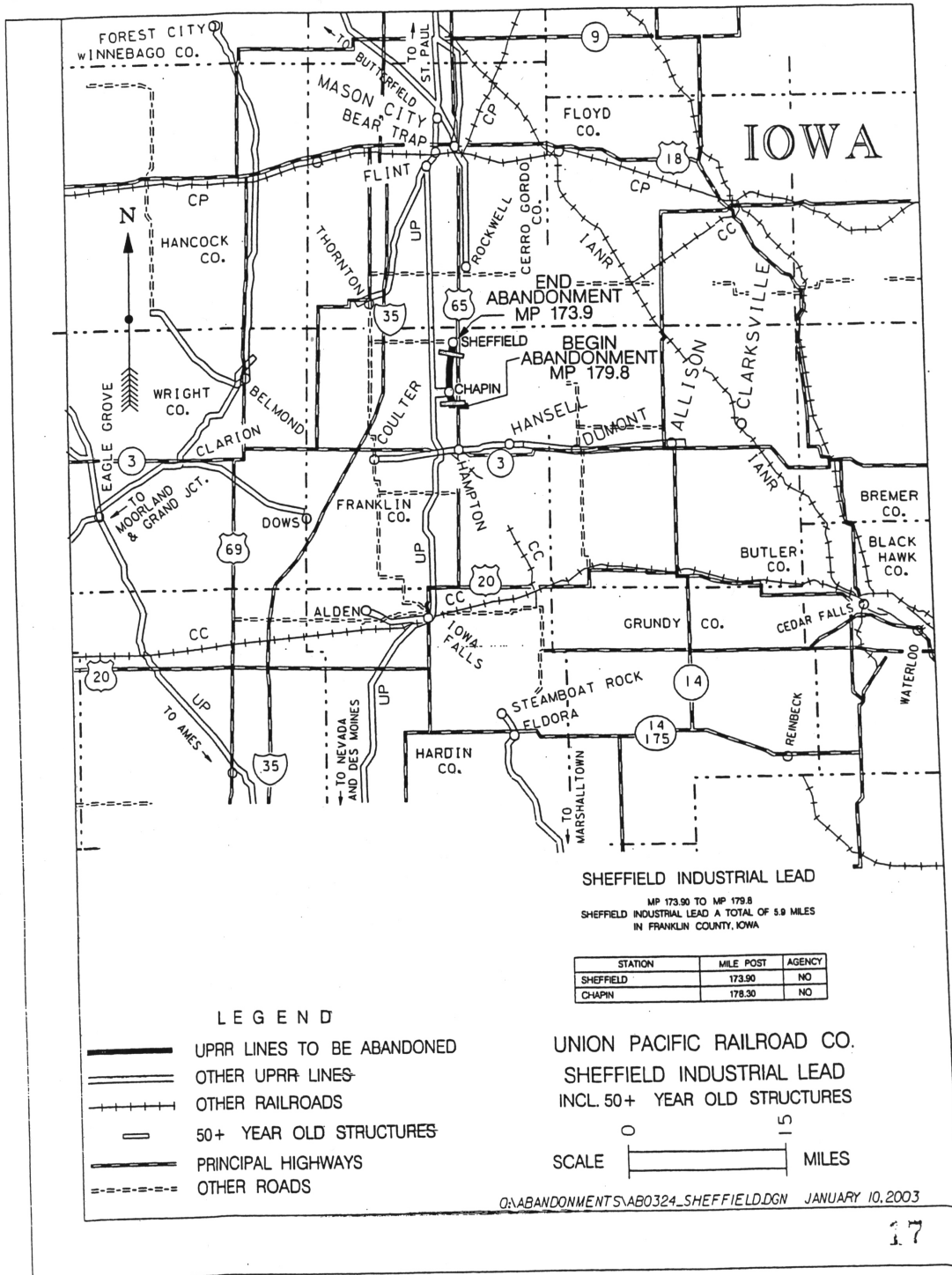
By the Surface Transportation Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

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ATTACHMENT 1



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